Slain Rosselli Had Met West Coast Crime Figures in Malibu, Hollywood in June

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John Rosselli, the slain mobster whose body was found Saturday stuffed in a metal drum floating in a Florida bay, met with several West Coast crime figures in the month before he was killed.

The meetings, closely monitored by FBI agents and Los Angeles Police Department intelligence officers, took place in a Malibu restaurant and a Hollywood hotel in the first two weeks in June.

Although no direct link has been established between the meetings and Rosselli's murder, details of the surveillance are being checked by federal agents.

Rosselli, 70, key figure in a reputed CIA plot to assassinate Fidel Castro, had made several recent appearances before Senate investigating committees.

However, despite Rosselli's supposed status as a "government witness," the FBI refused Wednesday to assume jurisdiction in the investigation of his gangland-style execution.

FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley, in response to an earlier request from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said: "We were informed that it (the murder) is a matter over which we have now no obvious or detectable jurisdiction."

Kelley told a Washington press conference, "If there is some later information (to indicate a change in jurisdiction) it might be that we would (investigate), but at this point we will not."

Jurisdiction rests with officials in Dade County, Fla., where Rosselli's body was discovered in a chain-wrapped metal barrel in an arm of Biscayne Bay off Miami.

Florida detectives said Rosselli had probably been dead since July 28, the day he disappeared. Investigators said Rosselli died of asphyxiation in what they said was "clearly earmarked as a true gangland-style killing."

On his recent trips to Los Angeles, according to investigators, Rosselli participated in a June 1 meeting at a Malibu restaurant with James (Jimmy the Weasel) Fratianno, 62, Michael (Mike Rizzi) Rizzitello, 49, and Allen Smiley, 69, a former associate of the late Mickey Cohen.

At a subsequent meeting on June 11, Rosselli met with Fratianno and Rizzitello in a restaurant in a Hollywood hotel, and two days later, met with Fratianno alone at the same hotel.

Rosselli did not show up at another meeting on June 6 at Murrieta Hot Springs, a desert resort and land development in Riverside County.

Those present at the resort conclave, investigators said, were Rizzitello, Louis Tom Dragna, 56, of Los Angeles, and Frank (The Bomp) Bompensiero, 71, ex-convict and reputed organized crime underboss in San Diego.

Fratianno, a Sacramento trucking contractor, is an ex-convict described in a 1959 Assembly committee report on organized crime as "West Coast executioner and enforcer for the Mafia."

Rizzitello, a convicted stickup man, is a former member of the New York Mafia family headed by the late Joseph (Crazy Joe) Gallo, according to the investigators.

Smiley, also known as Aaron Smehoff, is an ex-convict whose record shows arrests for murder, robbery and bookmaking. Smiley was reportedly sitting beside the late Benjamin (Bugsy) Siegel when he was slain in 1947 in his Beverly Hills home.

Dragna, a sport clothing manufacturer, is a nephew of the late Jack ("Capone of California") Dragna, and a longtime associate of numerous organized crime figures. He was convicted in a 1959 boxing extortion case, but the conviction was later overturned.

Investigators said they had not been able to uncover the reason for Rosselli's trips to California or his meetings with various organized crime figures.

Surveillance of Rosselli, said Senior FBI Agent Jack Barron, "was part of the bureau's effort to keep tabs on the activities and movement of people involved in organized crime."